



Economic Development 6

As Bluffton has grown in the last decade from one square mile to almost fifty-four square miles, with accompanying residential and commercial development and an increasing population, so too has its economy grown and changed. Over time it has undergone a transition, from a vital commercial center in the 1880s to a vacation destination for many families through the 1970s. Hilton Head Island, nearby Sun City, and other related development have also led to a resurgence of commercial activity. Bluffton is looking to the future with plans to maintain familiar local industries while attracting and developing new ones that will add to the diversity and sustainability of the local economy.

Vision

We strive to create a vital, diverse and sustainable local economy that enhances Bluffton's community resources: human, natural, and economic.

6.1 Labor Force and Employment

As Bluffton and its population have grown, its labor force has changed. During 2012 (see Figure 6.1), which is the most recent detailed data available, 6,279 of its residents were reported to work in the regional labor market; an increase of 5,544, or 754%, from 2000. Most were employed in the education (17.5%) and arts sector (15.3%) while other top industries were retail trade (13%) and construction (11.9%).

These drastic increases are the result of natural population growth, immigration, and most of all, annexations that took place prior to 2010.

Figure 6.1

Industry for the Employed Population 16+ Years, 2000 & 2012

Industry	2000	%	2010	%	Change 2000- 2010	% Change 2000- 2010
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	3	0.4%	144	2.3%	141	4700%
Construction	182	24.8%	747	11.9%	565	310%
Manufacturing	46	6.3%	201	3.2%	155	337%
Wholesale trade	12	1.6%	135	2.2%	123	1025%
Retail trade	125	17.0%	815	13.0%	690	552%
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	28	3.8%	418	6.7%	390	1393%
Information	8	1.1%	151	2.4%	143	1788%
Finance, insurance, real estate, and rental and leasing	40	5.4%	515	8.2%	475	1188%
Professional, scientific, management, administrative, and waste management services	50	6.8%	374	6.0%	324	648%
Educational, health and social services	75	10.2%	1,101	17.5%	1026	1368%
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation and food services	97	13.2%	960	15.3%	863	890%
Other services (except public administration)	41	5.6%	197	3.1%	156	380%
Public administration	28	3.8%	521	8.3%	493	1761%
Total	735	100%	6,279	100%	5,544	754%

Source: Census 2000, American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Estimates

The most current data, though, indicate that the majority of Bluffton's workers are employed in, what are not typically, high wage sectors. In accordance with income and housing information (see the Population and Housing chapters), it is apparent that the provision of workforce

housing should be an important goal for the community. As Bluffton grows and property values increase, we must ensure that current residents and its workforce can continue to live and work here. More detailed information on housing, a workforce housing analysis and related goals are included in the Housing chapter of this Plan.

Labor Force and Employment		
Need: Understanding of the labor market and the needs of area workers.		
Goal: Ensure that current residents and the workforce can continue to live and work in the Town.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Ensure affordable housing options.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	On-going

6.2 Commuting Patterns

In 2012, most Bluffton workers lived and worked in Beaufort County and over three-quarters commuted alone. The percentage of residents driving alone was higher in 2012 than in 2000 and the percentage participating in carpools dropped. This trend indicates that an increasing amount of Bluffton's residents are commuting alone instead of carpooling or using alternative means of transportation.

Figure 6.2 Means of Transportation to Work, Ages 16+, 2000 & 2012				
Means	2000	%	2012	%
Car, truck, or van -- drove alone	538	74.4%	5,024	81.3%
Car, truck, or van -- carpooled	114	15.8%	748	12.1%
Public transportation (including taxicab)	6	0.8%	0	0.0%
Walked	23	3.2%	188	3.0%
Other means	3	0.4%	53	0.9%
Worked at home	39	5.4%	166	2.7%
Total	723	100%	6,179	100%
Source: Census 2000, American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Estimates				

Most of Bluffton residents drove less than 34 minutes to work in 2012 which is similar to 2000 commuting patterns.

Figure 6.3 Population and Time to Work, 2000 & 2012				
Time	2000	%	2012	%
Worked at home	39	5.39%	166	2.69%
Less than 5 minutes	48	6.64%	187	3.03%
5 to 9 minutes	69	9.54%	606	9.81%
10 to 14 minutes	95	13.14%	955	15.46%
15 to 19 minutes	59	8.16%	728	11.78%
20 to 24 minutes	125	17.29%	846	13.69%
25 to 29 minutes	11	1.52%	608	9.84%
30 to 34 minutes	132	18.26%	955	15.46%
35 to 39 minutes	19	2.63%	171	2.77%
40 to 44 minutes	18	2.49%	411	6.65%
45 to 59 minutes	72	9.96%	314	5.08%
60 to 89 minutes	25	3.46%	129	2.09%
90 or more minutes	11	1.52%	103	1.67%
Total	723	100%	6,179	100%
Source: Census 2000 American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Estimates				

While most residents are working close to home, with commutes of 34 minutes or less, Bluffton should encourage the use of alternative means

of transportation. As Bluffton continues to grow it should, therefore, encourage the expansion of public transportation, pathways, and mixed use development to reduce the necessity of commuting alone by car.

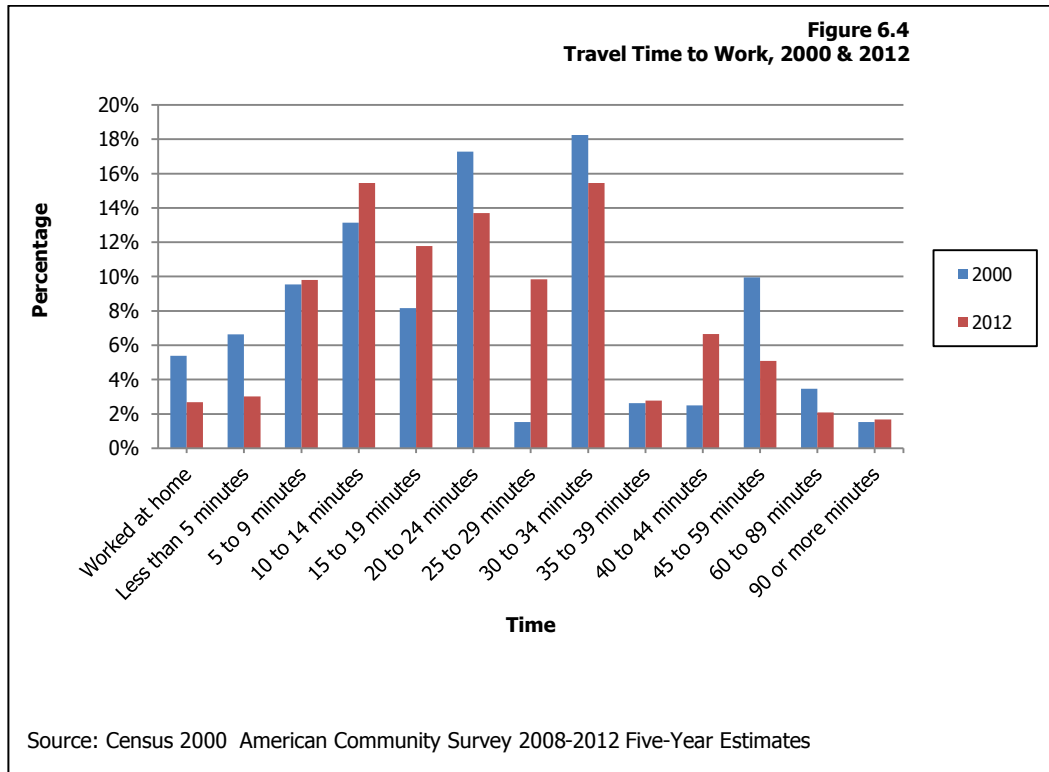


Figure 6.5 illustrates that a majority of Bluffton residents work within the South Carolina and Beaufort County.

Figure 6.5
Place of Work: State, County and Place (Bluffton) Level, 2000 & 2012

Place of Work	2000		2012	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Total Workers:	723	100%	6,179	100%
State				
Worked in state of residence:	691	95.6%	5,681	91.9%
Worked outside state of residence	32	4.4%	498	8.1%
County				
Worked in county of residence	683	94.5%	5,193	84.0%
Worked outside county of residence	8	1.1%	488	7.9%
Place (Bluffton)				
Worked in place of residence	123	17.0%	1,418	22.9%
Worked outside place of residence	600	83.0%	4,761	77.1%

Source: Census 2000, American Community Survey 2008-2012 Five-Year Estimates

6.3 Local Economy

When Bluffton was one square mile the only commercial area was along May River Road between Pritchard Street and Pine Oak/Thomas Heyward streets. May River Road was home to a gas station and a grocery store and a number of businesses to meet the daily needs of its residents. The only activity that could have been considered industrial was the Bluffton Oyster Factory.

According to US Census Bureau Zip Code Business Patterns Program data the greatest number of commercial establishments in Bluffton continues to be in the Construction and Retail Trade industries. This is consistent with expectations for an area known for tourism that is also experiencing growth in residential and commercial development.

Figure 6.6

Number of Establishments by Industry, 2004 & 2012

Industry Code	Industry Code Description	Total Establishments	
		2004	2012
11	Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, & Agriculture	1	1
22	Utilities	2	1
23	Construction	217	203
31	Manufacturing	20	15
42	Wholesale Trade	30	41
44	Retail Trade	196	221
48	Transportation & Warehousing	8	16
51	Information	10	13
52	Finance & Insurance	33	51
53	Real Estate & Rental & Leasing	44	57
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	67	105
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	3	5
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	53	95
61	Educational services	5	12
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	49	90
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	15	18
72	Accommodation & Food Services	54	89
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	40	76
99	Unclassified Establishments	2	0
Total		849	1,109

Source: US Census Bureau Zip Code Business Patterns Program for Zip Code 29910, 2004 and 2012

Bluffton also analyzed its 2012 business license list in table 6.7.

Although any organization conducting business in Bluffton is required to have a business license, all licensed businesses are not within the Town limits. The table below provides an interesting overview of the range of organizations doing business in the Bluffton area. As with the US Census Bureau Zip Code Business Patterns Program data, the greatest number of business licenses were issued to the Construction industry in 2012. Also similar to 2012 information, the second greatest number of business licenses was issued to Retail businesses. Third and fourth in number of business licenses were the Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services industry and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry respectively.

Figure 6.7

Number of Bluffton Business Licenses by Industry, 2012

NAICS Industry Code	Industry Code Description	Number of Town of Bluffton Business Licenses Issued		
		In-Town	Out of Town	Total
23	Construction	151	539	690
44-45	Retail Trade	204	53	257
56	Administrative & Support & Waste Management & Remediation Services	75	194	269
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	125	39	164
53	Real Estate and Rental & Leasing	58	50	108
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	127	33	160
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	118	3	121
72	Accommodation & Food Services	143	11	154
52	Finance & Insurance	28	2	30
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	41	9	50
42	Wholesale Trade	17	3	20
51	Information	8	4	12
33	Primary Metal Manufacturing	5	3	8
48	Transportation & Warehousing	13	11	24
61	Educational Services	20	2	22
32	Wood Product Manufacturing	8	1	9
92	Public Administration	1	1	2
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2	3	5
49	Transportation & Warehousing	4	0	4
55	Management of Companies & Enterprises	0	0	0
Total		1,148	961	2,109

Source: Town of Bluffton Business License Database

Commercial Density

There are currently 1,990 acres of existing and permitted commercial development in Bluffton, which includes those approved through development agreements.

Figure 6.8 Town of Bluffton Permitted Commercial Area, 2012	
Planning Area	Commercial Acres
Bluffton Village PUD	21
Buck Island/Simmons ville Area	155.23
Buckwalter PUD	758.361
Goethe/Schults Road Area	4
Jones Tract PUD	150
Kent Estates PUD	12
Mindstream Academy PUD	26
New Riverside PUD	390
Old Town	23
Palmetto Bluff PUD	180
Schults Tract PUD	230
Village at Verdier PUD	40
Total	1,990
Source: Town of Bluffton Growth Management Department. * Commercial square footage was converted to acreage for the purpose of this Figure. The conversion utilized the average square feet of development per acre within the Town at a rate of 10,000 square feet = 1 acre.	

Light industrial is currently allowed in limited locations and these include some of the commercial areas under Development Agreements. There is little interest to attract industrial business to the area, either from residents or local business and economic development leaders. However, Bluffton intends to maintain a few light industrial sites to allow for some clean industries that are compatible with the Lowcountry's natural environment. Bluffton must determine how to balance retail with non-retail commercial business areas, such as business parks and research and development facilities. Zoning and

development standards should also be flexible enough to allow for the kind of mixed use development that is appealing to technology and knowledge-based businesses.

Local Economy		
Need: Balanced local economy.		
Goal: Ensure a balanced local economy through commercial development monitoring.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Monitor conversions from commercial to residential uses and the effect it has on the local economy.	Planning	On-going
Goal: Ensure a balanced local economy through revisions to zoning and land use regulations.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Balance retail with non-retail commercial business areas such as business parks and research and development facilities.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	Short
2. Ensure zoning and development standards are flexible enough to allow for the kind of mixed use development that is appealing to technology and knowledge-based businesses.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	Medium
3. Maintain few light industrial sites, but allow for some clean industry that is compatible with the Lowcountry's natural environment.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	Short

6.4 Retention

Efforts to retain existing businesses ensure a dynamic economy by encouraging its continued health and expansion. Therefore, Bluffton will maintain and strengthen relationships through the Bluffton Public Development Corporation and regional partners and continue to seek additional opportunities to market and support existing businesses. These regional partners include the South Carolina Department of Commerce's Entrepreneurship and Small Business Services division, the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, Bluffton's Old Town Merchants Society, the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society and The University of South Carolina (USC) Small Business Development Center and the Service Corps of Retired Executives.

Long-range plans, such as the Old Town Master Plan the Buck Island-Simmonsville Neighborhood Plan, and the SC 46 Corridor Management Plan, recommend enhancing Bluffton's unique character to encourage tourism, expand retail clusters such as the artisans of the Old Town, and increase public awareness of locally-owned and operated businesses. These plans reflect the resident's dedication to protect Bluffton's character, while allowing it to be revitalized in a way that is consistent with its history and eccentricity. The implementation of the Old Town Master Plan specifically includes revitalizing streetscapes and maintaining a pedestrian scale through the addition and improvement of sidewalks, street lighting, benches and other amenities. Such projects enhance the economy and health of existing businesses as well as civic appearance. There are a number of State and federal programs that can assist efforts to develop programs for revitalizing or improving the appearance of downtown areas such as Downtown Development Association of the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

Retention		
Need: Preservation of existing businesses.		
Goal: Ensure a dynamic economy by encouraging the continued health and expansion of existing businesses.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Maintain and strengthen relationships with regional partners and seek additional opportunities for the marketing and support of existing businesses.	South Carolina Department of Commerce's Entrepreneurship and Small Business Services division, Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, Bluffton's Old Town Merchants Society, Bluffton Historical Preservation Society, University of South Carolina (USC) Small Business Development Center, Service Corps of Retired Executives.	On-going
2. Enhance the Town's unique character and appearance to encourage tourism, expand retail clusters such as the artisans of the Old Town, and increase public awareness of locally-owned and operated businesses.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Committee, Planning, local businesses, Downtown Development Association of the South Carolina Department of Commerce.	Medium

6.5 Tourism

Tourism is a naturally occurring business cluster in the Lowcountry's coastal counties and lovely landscapes and weather, combined with a rich history and Southern charm, seem to bring a steady flow of visitors through the Bluffton area. In recent years local organizations such as the Bluffton Historic Preservation Society, the Hilton Head Island – Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and the Old Town Merchants Society have worked together to capitalize on Bluffton's historic resources, increasing its draw as a tourist destination and making tourism an increasingly important part of the economic base. Therefore, Bluffton should continue to seek additional National Register nominations for individual structures in its Historic District, pursue the creation of a demolition by neglect ordinance and continue to improve the overall environment of Old Town to further preservation efforts.

The implementation of the Old Town Master Plan includes a number of projects that will enhance Bluffton's charm. Among these are the May River/Bruin Road Streetscape, designing streets for walkability, enhancing connections to the May River, clustering retail, and investing in maintaining and enhancing Bluffton's tree canopy. Not only will these objectives result in attracting visitors to the area, but they will also improve the quality of life for its residents.

The Bluffton Historic Preservation Society and the Old Town Merchants Society are working well in marketing Old Town as a tourism destination and the Hilton Head Island–Bluffton Chamber of Commerce has demonstrated their ongoing support through the Bluffton Branding Project and the opening of a Bluffton satellite office at the Hwy 46 four-way stop. Bluffton will continue to support these organizations and others in enhancing and promoting its historical assets. Guided walking tours are provided by the Bluffton Historic Preservation Society or visitors can take a self-guided tour using the numerous informational kiosks installed around the Old Town as part of the Town's Wayfinding project. The Wayfinding project included not only informational Kiosks, but coherent street signs throughout the Old Town as well as installation of directional signage at major intersections to guide visitors to Old Town. Bluffton should continue to seek new ways to educate and entertain visitors by a variety of tours, interpretive signs and other creative means.

Another aspect of tourism that is becoming popular, and for which Bluffton is well suited, is known as eco-tourism. Bluffton's beautiful natural environment and pristine waterways are inviting to outdoor enthusiasts seeking opportunities to walk, bike, kayak and observe birds and wildlife. To support this, Bluffton intends to expand and improve public parks and access to the May River for residents and tourists alike and will also encourage the development of outdoor experience businesses and guided tours, as well as create a system of interpretive signs for natural features, as recommended by the SC 46 Corridor Management Plan. To implement historic and eco-tourism projects Bluffton will seek support from state programs and grants for capital projects, interpretation and education, training of tourism workers and others.

Tourism		
Need: Capitalization on the great amount of visitors and lowcountry tourists.		
Goal: Capitalize on the Town's historic resources by increasing Bluffton's draw as a tourist destination.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Continue to seek additional National Register nominations for individual structures in the Historic District.	Town Council, Historic Preservation Committee, Planning	On-going
2. Adopt a demolition by neglect ordinance.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning, Engineering	Medium
3. Implement the Old Town Master Plan.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	Short
4. Market the Old Town as a tourist destination.	Town Council, Historic Preservation Committee, Old Town Merchants Society, Planning	On-going
5. Develop new methods to educate and entertain visitors through a variety of tours, interpretive signage, and other creative means.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Committee, Planning	Medium
6. Encourage and support ecotourism.	Town Council, Administration	On-going
7. Seek grant funding for grants for capital projects, interpretation and education, training of tourism workers and other projects.	Town Council, Administration	Medium

6.6 Economic Development and Diversification

Bluffton Public Development Corporation

The Town of Bluffton's Public Development Corporation (Corporation) is a 501(c)(3) community driven organization that was established in 2012 by Town Council. The Corporation's mission is to enhance the business climate for investment and development and attract new business to Bluffton by facilitating and brokering economic and real estate development opportunities.

Governed by an eight-member Board of Directors, comprised of community and business leaders, the Bluffton Public Development Corporation meets monthly to discuss and pursue business recruiting and expansion activities to grow and diversify Bluffton's economy.

The Corporation touches a wide array of initiatives aimed at bringing primary jobs to Bluffton. and Board members of the Corporation come from a variety of industries and offer their time and talents in service to the community at large and provide unique insights into the process of attracting and retaining businesses.

The Bluffton Public Development Corporation's 2018 Goals include:

1. Develop a high performing Public Development Corporation;
2. Develop Buckwalter Place - A Multi-County Business/Industrial Park;
3. Support a positive climate for business development investment; and
4. Increase the number of diverse businesses and job opportunities within Bluffton.

Economic Diversity

In the pursuit of economic diversity, the Corporation focuses on the development of the knowledge-based business sector. This sector is about creativity and knowledge, characterized by innovation and the application of technology and paying higher wages.

Knowledge-based businesses are found in the information and the professional, scientific and technical services industry sectors. Knowledge based businesses could include magazine publishing

companies, software development, architectural or engineering services, and scientific research and development. In a coastal location, like Bluffton's, maritime and water quality research and development could be an ideal knowledge-based sector to target.

Manufacturing and traditional industrial businesses have not had a significant presence in Bluffton and these industries may be in conflict with its desire to preserve the natural environment as a prime asset. At the same time, retail, hospitality and food service, and construction industries dominate, making most available jobs lower wage. The attraction of technical/professional businesses that support regional industries provides a means to create a sustainable, higher-wage economic future for Bluffton.

Target Industries Study

The Lowcountry Economic Alliance (LEA), a strategic partner with the Bluffton Public Development Corporation, released its economic development study in 2012. That study is the framework for Lowcountry business recruitment as it recommends targeting four industry clusters which would be ideal for the Lowcountry's pro-business environment while balancing the needs of the region's natural resources and include healthcare/biomedical, administrative/information technology, light manufacturing/assembly and logistics/distribution.

The study indicated Beaufort and Jasper Counties were strategically positioned for strong economic growth due to the region's ideal geographic location, pro-business/entrepreneurial climate, educated workforce, proximity to universities and technical colleges and its fast-growing population. Beaufort and Jasper Counties are also close to transportation hubs such as I-95, airport, train service, ports and major cities.

In addition to recommending specific industry clusters, the study also recommends the following to continue the region's economic growth momentum:

- Regional investments to enhance infrastructure.
- Collaborate with the University of South Carolina at Beaufort (USCB) and the Technical College of the Lowcountry to target curricula to deliver specific workplace skills to specific industries.

- Advance workforce development initiatives to enhance and target skill sets of young professionals and high-skilled former military employees.

Target Industries

Based upon the LEA's Targeted Economic Development Strategy for the Lowcountry, Bluffton has identified three target markets:

1. Health Care/Biomedical

The healthcare industry is one with a proven track record in the Lowcountry and specifically in the Town of Bluffton. In 2004, CareCore National, the nation's largest specialty benefit management company, relocated its headquarters to Bluffton. It is now the town's largest employer with more than 474 employees at its Bluffton headquarters and 1,500 employees nationwide.

The Town of Bluffton is actively recruiting like-minded healthcare and biomedical companies. This sector includes healthcare headquarters, healthcare service providers, biosciences research and manufacturing such as equipment, devices and pharmaceutical companies.

The Town of Bluffton's average age of its residents is 33 years old. However, there is an aging population which surrounds the Town. The region's demographics provide healthcare and biomedical companies with a young workforce and a growth market of those needing healthcare services in the same region.

In addition, the Lowcountry and its surrounding areas boasts of a robust healthcare industry with several hospitals in the region. Those hospitals include: Beaufort Memorial Hospital, Hilton Head Hospital, Coastal Carolina Hospital, Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center/Beaufort Clinic and several hospitals in nearby Savannah, Georgia. In the past decade, Beaufort County's healthcare jobs have increased by 70%.

Bluffton is an ideal location for regional medical companies seeking an inspirational campus setting and a high-quality of life for their employees. Likewise with biomedical supply firms, the

proximity to transportation hubs such as the Ports of Charleston and Savannah, I-95, airports, train service and major cities is an added bonus.

As this sector grows, economic development organizations will facilitate collaboration among private companies, local universities' research and development departments, educators and local service providers to promote sector expansion as well as advancing the economy as a whole.

2. Corporate Headquarters

The corporate headquarters industry cluster is a perfect complement to Bluffton's business environment. This cluster includes providing the central location where corporate employees are employed and where the majority of the company's or the company's business units such as financial, human resources, legal, planning, information technology are physically-based.

The region's largest employer in the field, CareCore National, provides a boost to the cluster's future potential. The company helps large health insurance companies manage their customers and services. The company has grown to more than 400 employees in the Lowcountry in just three years and is located in Buckwalter Place, the heart of the Bluffton's commercial area.

The Town of Bluffton has partnered with CareCare CareCore to recruit more corporate headquarters and innovative companies to the area. In 2012, CareCore National donated the office space for the Town's business incubator, the Don Ryan Center for Innovation. The Town, with CareCore's donation, also partnered with Clemson University to create the first Clemson Technology Village in South Carolina. The Town of Bluffton and the Don Ryan Center for Innovation have mentored other centers and towns in non-metropolitan areas of the state as they also established their Technology Villages or innovation centers.

Bluffton pioneered the concept of establishing an innovation center in a non-metropolitan area. Because the Town offers companies a pro-business environment in an area where their executives and employees can enjoy a high quality of life.

Bluffton's ability to offer access to waterways, abundant natural resources, small-town culture and desirable climate is unmatched.

In addition to Bluffton's beautiful surroundings, it also offers a highly-skilled workforce. Due to CareCore being the town's largest employer, the company has been instrumental in creating a workforce in Beaufort County which possesses skill sets complementary to more corporate headquarters. The workforce has skills sets such as cost management, record maintenance, customer service and back office technologies. These skills are highly transferable and would support a number of other vertical industries. CareCore offers a seed for expanding the fast-growing medical-related back office and records management niche in the Lowcountry.

3. Back Office & IT

The "back office" industry cluster includes companies' call/customer service centers, technical support, processing facilities and data centers. Bluffton's largest employer, CareCore National, operates an expansive call center in its Bluffton headquarters as hundreds of employees evaluate healthcare insurance claims. This type of "clean industry" is the Town of Bluffton's perfect match; it provides high-quality jobs for the local economy while producing no environmentally-damaging byproducts.

These are the type of companies the Town of Bluffton is actively recruiting. Among the industries which would complement Bluffton's high-quality lifestyle is the financial services industry. This industry has historically outsourced support operations to third-party firms specializing in back office support. More industries are exploring this concept as a cost-saving measure.

The information-technology, payroll, accounting and other administrative functions of companies are additional sectors which are ideal to locate to Bluffton.

The Lowcountry has a relatively strong, current concentration in the back-office functions. Employing more than 4,300 workers in the Lowcountry, the sector grew 7.7% from 2005-2010.

CareCore National's success provides a boost to the cluster's future potential. The company has added hundreds of employees in just three years and is located in Buckwalter Place, a large commercial park dedicated for similar companies. CareCore's willingness to partner with Clemson University and the Town of Bluffton to create the Don Ryan Center for Innovation, has positioned Bluffton as a statewide competitor for entrepreneurial companies.

In addition, CareCore has created a local workforce which possesses specialized skills in cost management, record maintenance, customer service and information technologies. These skills are highly transferable and would support a number of other vertical industries. CareCore offers a seed for expanding the fast-growing medical-related back office and records management niche in the Lowcountry.

Target Industry Growth Factors

Several factors supporting the growth of all the target industries in the Lowcountry are:

- An exiting military workforce, which is a good match for process-oriented support services and customer-orientation;
- A greatly expanded Computational Science program at USCB, especially in applied studies related to other target industries such as logistics, light manufacturing, and aerospace;
- A tourism-oriented workforce, which has been trained in customer service;
- A growing college population in neighboring Savannah and Beaufort;
- Increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship as an economic development engine, creating firms that will increase demand for local technical and IT support services;
- Low cost of doing business;
- The Lowcountry's appealing natural environment and attractiveness to executive visitors and retirees, making the region an ideal setting for corporate campuses and regional headquarters;

- A regional distribution cluster will make logistics-related back office and IT an emerging opportunity; and
- Lowcountry Economic Alliance committed to encouraging development and training of qualified Back Office employees.

Back Office and Information Technology Niche Targets include:

- IT and Technical Services;
- Records Management;
- Medical-Related Back Office; and
- Regional Headquarters.

Back Office and Information Technology Emerging Opportunities:

- Logistics-Related Back Office and IT.

Buckwalter Place MCIP

Buckwalter Place, a 94-acre knowledge-based, technologically advanced mixed-use development, is the focus and nexus of economic, institutional, commercial, governmental, educational, entertainment, residential, social and cultural activity in southern Beaufort County. The goal of Buckwalter Place, a Multi-County Business/Industrial Park (MCIP), is to expand the economic base of the Town of Bluffton and region by attracting knowledge-based industries and providing a vibrant quality of life. A streamlined development strategy with customized economic development incentives, advanced technology, urban lifestyle, quality private investment, community leadership, access and connection to a trained workforce, and a concentration of knowledge based-employees, differentiates Buckwalter Place from other regional sites.

Buckwalter Place development is led by the Buckwalter Place Leadership Group, a collaboration of public and private strategic partners from the region who are focused on the success of the project and the advancement of regional economic development initiatives. Bluffton will continue to work with these strategic partners and pursue state and local programs including grants for infrastructure, workforce training, and multi-county park development. It is possible that other

mixed-use technology villages will be developed if Bluffton and its partners are successful in the marketing the region.

Don Ryan Center for Innovation

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation is a public-private partnership between the Clemson Institute for Economic and Community Development, Care Core National and the Town of Bluffton. The Center's mission is to advance regional economic development by offering a technology/innovation incubator program that provides the resources entrepreneurs, inventors and small business people need to assist them in their quest for success.

The Bluffton-based center offers space and resources and links participants with support in intellectual property, technology evaluation, and product development services as well as seed financing, business mentorships, corporate relationships and hands-on consulting support. Located in the May River Technology Park at Buckwalter Place in Bluffton, the Don Ryan Center for Innovation is the catalyst innovators need to make their concept a reality.

The Don Ryan Center for Innovation is supported by the Town of Bluffton, Clemson University's Institute for Economic and Community Development, CareCore National and Buckwalter Tech Park along with additional private sponsors including: St. Joseph's/Candler, Nexsen Pruet, Regions Bank and Hargray Communications. Other sponsors are Bank of America, McNair Law Firm, Custom Audio Video, WebsterRogers LLP and BFG Communications.

This 501(c)(3) community-driven organization reports to an experienced seven-member board appointed by the Town Council of Bluffton that works in cooperation with Clemson University's Institute for Economic and Community Development to create, accelerate, expand and incubate jobs for our region. Known as a "Clemson Technology Village," this program is currently exclusive to Bluffton, Hartsville and Rock Hill with plans to expand to Conway and other rural communities throughout South Carolina.

Talent Development & Workforce

Bluffton has a diverse and growing workforce marked by competitive wages and ample skilled employees representing diverse demographics from retired executives to young professionals. However, to compete with other regions Bluffton needs to continue to attract and provide well-educated and highly-trained employees. Therefore, the creation and support of an environment that promotes the expansion of available training and education is crucial.

Talent development may be one of the most challenging aspects of the Town's efforts. Competing for knowledge-based businesses is about attracting knowledge workers, since in this model, where knowledge is the raw material, businesses follow workers. Workers are then left to make location decisions based on quality of life factors, which is one thing Bluffton has in abundance. That message needs to be marketed. In addition, Bluffton needs to encourage a creative culture, mixed use villages, recreational resources, entertainment, and other amenities that contribute to quality of life.

However, attracting qualified workers is only a part of the challenge. The other aspect of talent development is to educate the local workforce, thereby, increasing their skills and marketability. This task requires a collaborative effort of educational partners from middle and high schools, technical schools, colleges, universities, other educational institutions, and professional associations. Bluffton, or associated economic development organizations, need to partner with local educational institutions to identify and develop knowledge based and skilled workers, and to create curricula that develop the personnel resources needed by existing and new industry clusters and businesses. South Carolina state programs such as the Workforce Investment Act, training and grant opportunities such as ReadySC, and military contacts may also contribute to this task.

Economic Development and Diversification		
Need: Diversification and development of the local economy.		
Goal: Facilitate economic opportunities for Bluffton and the Greater Bluffton area. Enhance Bluffton's human, natural, and economic resources and yield results that are sustainable and promote economic diversity.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Attract technical/professional businesses that support regional industry and provide a means to create a sustainable, higher-wage economic future for Bluffton.	Economic Development Subcommittee	Medium
2. Create an environment that promotes recruitment.	Town Council, Administration, Planning, Economic Development Committee	Medium
3. Establish Bluffton as center with infrastructure to support technology businesses and create a Wireless Community, providing hotspots in appropriate places throughout the Town.	Town Council, Administration, Planning, Economic Development Committee	Medium
Economic Development and Diversification		
4. Develop plan for promoting the region and a strategy to recruit targeted companies to relocate or develop businesses in Bluffton.	Town Council, Administration, Planning, Economic Development Committee	Medium
Goal: Facilitate economic opportunities for Bluffton and the Greater Bluffton area. Enhance Bluffton's human, natural, and economic resources and yield results that are sustainable and promote economic diversity.		
Responsible Parties	Responsible Parties	Responsible Parties
1. Connect with and utilize supporting efforts at the state level.	Town Council, Administration, Planning, Palmetto Institute, SCRA, Technology Alliance, multi-county park development, other regional initiatives	Medium
2. Partner and support education of the local workforce to increase skills and marketability.	Colleges, Universities, Educational institutions, professional associations, Workforce Investment Act, Town Council, Administration, Planning	Medium

3. Encourage the creative culture, mixed use technology villages, recreational resources, entertainment, and other amenities that contribute to quality of life.	Town Council, Planning Commission, Planning	On-going
4. Establish public corporations for economic development, real estate management, and marketing.	Town Council, Administration	Medium

6.7 Regional Economic Development Partners

Communication and cooperation are critical among local agencies and governments involved with economic development. This requires acknowledging that economic development benefits are regional in nature, a belief that Bluffton has demonstrated to be an important part of its development activities. In addition to increasing the potential for funding multi-jurisdictional projects, regional economic development programs can eliminate duplicated efforts and can result in better coordinated services. Bluffton should establish closer ties to Beaufort County development groups to ensure that its commercial locations are most effectively marketed and so that it can become an active participant in county-wide economic development projects and programs.

Regional Economic Development Partners

In addition to increasing the potential for funding multi-jurisdictional projects, regional economic development programs can eliminate duplicated efforts and can result in better coordinated services. A description of programs that Bluffton should maintain on-going communication with is as follows:

South Carolina Department of Commerce: The Department of Commerce implements a number of state and federal programs for economic development. Technical assistance includes leadership programs, the South Carolina Economic Developer's School, and workforce training programs. The department supports product development of industrial parks and speculative buildings, and community development through downtown development and rural infrastructure programs. The department also administers a variety of federal and state grants.

Lowcountry Economic Alliance: The Lowcountry Economic Alliance (LEA), a business development and recruitment network, is a public-private partnership whose primary purpose is to provide comprehensive business/industrial development and recruitment services. The LEA's mission is "to promote and assist with quality, sustainable economic development and growth through an alliance with the private sector as it creates career path opportunities and expands the business tax base of the Lowcountry Region."

The LEA is a fully connected resource that fosters and manages current and future economic prosperity while maintaining the Lowcountry's unique environment and lifestyle. They also consult with local municipalities to implement policies, procedures and ordinances which make the region more appealing to prospective business. It also serves the organizations seeking to relocate or expand their business in the Lowcountry Region as they deliver quality jobs in a quality lifestyle.

LEA Goals and Objectives:

- To improve the strength and stability of the Lowcountry economy;
- To provide good quality, sustainable, value-added jobs for residents; and
- To reduce the burden of residential property taxes within the counties by strengthening and expanding the business tax base all while promoting and protecting the region's sustainable, natural lifestyle.

Services provided include:

- Regional marketing to promote the Lowcountry's pro-business economic policies;
- Gathering and providing information regarding demographics and statistics;
- Site location consulting including available land, existing buildings and build-to-suit facilities;
- Regional site visits for business site selection;
- Incentive analysis, guidance and preparation;
- Planning and permitting assistance and direction;
- Workforce development support; and
- Advocacy for economic development and business.

The Creative Coast Initiative: The Creative Coast Initiative (TCCi) works to improve the quality of life in the Savannah area by building a diverse, innovative and higher-wage economic future that greatly increase opportunities for everyone. The organization works to foster a dynamic business climate for creative, knowledge-based jobs. The organization's focus area includes the Bluffton area, Hilton Head Island and Beaufort. TCCi works to raise the profile of the

Lowcountry as a smart place to work, live and play, and to make the connections that bring knowledge-based jobs and workers to the region. Bluffton could benefit from a more formalized partnership with this organization.

Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce: The mission of the Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is to lead the enhancement, expansion and diversification of the business community throughout the Beaufort region. The Chamber provides its 950 members with several services, including networking opportunities, training for small businesses, advocacy for local businesses with local, state and federal governing bodies, and tourism services. The Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce is the designated marketing organization for tourism to the City of Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal and the unincorporated areas of Beaufort County. The Chamber partners with a wide variety of non-profit organizations and businesses to market the hospitality industry and to attract visitors through Destination Beaufort, Travel Guide and other publications. The Beaufort Regional Chamber is an ally of Bluffton's in business retention and tourism efforts.

Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce: An organization of over 1,750 members and 25 staff, held the honor of National Chamber of the Year in 2000 and 2006. The Chamber serves its members and the area through several divisions. Membership Development provides programs and services to members and continually works to increase membership. The Visitor & Convention Bureau cultivates convention business and tourism. The Workforce Development & Education division implements initiatives to prepare students and jobseekers for the workplace and assists members to recruit, retain and develop their workforce. Government Relations serves as a liaison between the business community and local, state and federal officials, working cooperatively to ensure a healthy business environment. Communications coordinates local and national public relations and oversees special events, and Finance & Administration manages the operations of the organization. The Chamber also staffs and organizes a number of committees to promote and coordinate the efforts of local businesses, such as the Bluffton Marketing Committee which focuses on the branding of Bluffton and cooperative marketing to increase tourism to the Bluffton area.

Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society: This group's mission is to establish Old Town Bluffton as a destination for residents and tourists by highlighting its unique historical, cultural and shopping opportunities. The organization's area of focus spans north to south from the Bluffton Parkway to the May River and east to west from Burnt Church Road to Buck Island Road, although as Bluffton expands so does the focus area. The group partners with and leverages the resources of the Chamber of Commerce including direct marketing funding, cooperative marketing, town festivals and events. Members of the organization include restaurants, banks, realtors and churches as well as retail merchants. The group has created a shopping map that identifies the locations of shops, restaurants, as well as other members of the society. The group works in cooperation with the Heyward House as their Welcome Center, including the Heyward House in events and marketing materials.

Bluffton Historical Preservation Society: The mission of the Bluffton Historical Preservation Society (BHPS) is to protect, preserve, and promote the cultural heritage and history of St. Luke's Parish (est.1767) through education, marketing, hands-on preservation of buildings and sites, maintenance of an historical archive, and operation of Heyward House Historic Center. Over the past two and a half decades, the Society's efforts have led to a whole host of achievements such as the creation of the Bluffton National Register Historic District and a recent passage of a historic preservation ordinance protecting the historic resources, character, and sense of place of Old Bluffton. The Society also marks important buildings throughout the District and presents the annual Calwell Award for excellence in individual preservation efforts in Bluffton. The Society will continue to serve the community by educating the residents and its' visitors about the historical and architectural legacy of Bluffton and working toward the preservation of its historic built environment. BHPS is a valuable partner of Bluffton's in promoting historical tourism.

Educational Partners: A significant factor for business development is local education and training opportunities. Bluffton is fortunate to be close to many educational institutions, some of which are listed below:

- Beaufort County School District (PreK-12);

- University of South Carolina – Beaufort and New River (USCB);
- Technical College of the Lowcountry;
- Savannah College of Art and Design;
- Georgia Tech at Savannah; and
- Academy of Career Excellence.

Bluffton should support local educational institutions, establish close ties with them and knowledge of their curricula, and create mutually beneficial partnerships. The presence of colleges and universities can create a creative and innovative culture in a town that should be encouraged. Satellite classrooms and internship opportunities could be created to encourage the integration of the colleges and universities and their students into the town. Bluffton should explore the potential relationships between the curricula of the schools with industries targeted for attraction to the area, such as Information Technology, Mariculture, Economic Development, Medical Imaging and other professional and technical programs.

Others: As the region grows and changes, Bluffton will need to expand its economic development network to include the City of Hardeeville’s economic development staff, and other potential regional, state and federal partners.

Regional Economic Development Partners		
Need: Partnerships and coordination for economic development.		
Goal: Support and coordinate a region-wide economic development effort.		
Implementation Steps	Responsible Parties	Time Frame
1. Ensure communication and coordination among local economic development agencies and jurisdictions to avoid duplication of efforts.	SC Dept. of Commerce, Greater Beaufort- Hilton Head Economic Partnership, Creative Coast Initiative, Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce, Hilton Head- Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, Old Town Merchants Society, Bluffton Historical Preservation Society, Educational Partners	Short